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FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1362
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USNMR SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000599

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2017

TAGS: [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: HIGH REPRESENTATIVE LAJCAK BRIEFS THE NAC ON
"REGIONAL CRISIS"

REF: A. STATE 153348

[¶](#)B. SARAJEVO 2236

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard Olson,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: In a calm yet forceful address to the North Atlantic Council on November 7, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Miroslav Lajcak called on NATO and the international community to recognize that the Bosnian Serbs are working with the support of Belgrade and Moscow to undermine the authority of the international community in the Western Balkans. Lajcak said his October 19 measures (Ref B) were limited steps aimed at improving the functioning of national institutions. However, he said the Bosnian Serbs had used his action to raise the greatest ever challenge to the Dayton Accords by calling into question the mandate of the international community and the OHR. Lajcak asserted that Banja Luka is not interested in Euro Atlantic integration, that Belgrade is playing a regional game, and that Moscow is playing a global one. Lajcak said he would continually look for ways to reduce tensions and resolve the situation amicably but insisted that escalation by the other side could not go unanswered. Lajcak said the international community may be confronted by yet more escalation by the Republika Srpska. Without providing many details, Lajcak requested that Allies be ready to back his position through practical measures, such as sanctions on the RS. He also predicted that the required UNSC renewal of the EUFOR's mandate (UNSCR 1722) by November 21 could be problematic.

[¶](#)2. (C) Summary continued: Twenty-one Allies made statements of explicit support for OHR. Only Germany's intervention took a unique tone, cautioning that sanctions would have to be effective, and questioning the realism of Lajcak's previous efforts to provide the Bosnian Serbs safe avenues for retreat from their extreme positions. There was general agreement that EUFOR could be impacted severely by recent developments and skepticism that the force is sufficient to deal with a major crisis. End Summary.

[¶](#)3. (C) The SYG welcomed High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina Miroslav Lajcak to the November 7 meeting of the North Atlantic Council by observing that the Office of the High Representative is playing a crucial role in Bosnia with the full support of the international community. The SYG said that, within the confines of its role and mandate, NATO will continue to support the OHR. The SYG added that the Alliance particularly opposes destabilizing statements such as the recent one from Belgrade linking the situation in Kosovo to

that in Bosnia.

¶4. (C) Lajcak praised NATO as a key actor in the Western Balkans but warned that the international community faces a crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina that derives from broader developments in the region. Lajcak was scathing in his assessment of Russia's attitude and its role as a member of the Peace Implementation Council. Russia wanted to limit the use of the Bonn Powers to only those situations where all parties consented to the action. Such an interpretation, Lajcak said, was an attempt to prevent the OHR from taking executive decisions. He called on the international community to recognize these events as part of a larger political development in the Western Balkans involving Banja Luka, Belgrade and Moscow. Belgrade, he said, is playing a regional game, and Moscow a global one.

¶5. (C) Lajcak said his use of the Bonn Powers on October 19 had addressed the dysfunctionality of rules of procedure in the state-level Council of Ministers, where minorities could block progress by simply not turning up for discussions. He noted that the Bosnian Serb attempt to call into question the legitimacy of the Bonn Powers was not backed by history - 6 High Representatives had used the Bonn Powers a total of 829 times. Lajcak said the Bosnian Serbs had ignored the substance of the dispute over his use of the Bonn Powers, choosing instead to call into question the legitimacy of international intervention in Bosnia. The result is a continuing assault on the Dayton Accords, constituting the most serious threat to their implementation since 1995.

¶6. (C) Lajcak used the example of police reform to illustrate his statement that the Bosnian Serbs are not interested in European or Euro Atlantic integration. Despite the EU's emphasis on the necessity for police reform before SAA talks could begin, RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik and BiH Prime Minister Nikola Spiric had deliberately opposed reform to advance their own parochial interests. Lajcak thought the October 28 Mostar Declaration could have been a subsequent way forward on the issue of police reform but said he saw no evidence of any follow-up.

¶7. (C) Lajcak argued that if the OHR is needed, then its authority must be upheld. He suggested that it would be appropriate to wait one more week to assess Bosnian Serb attitudes, but after that it could be time for concrete action, perhaps in the form of financial sanctions on the RS. He asserted that, if the situation escalates further, the status of the OHR will need to be backed by practical measures beyond statements of support. Lajcak warned that if the OHR was lost as an effective tool in Bosnia then responsibility for handling the situation would move to capitals, an outcome that the international community does not want and which would not produce better results.

¶8. (C) Lajcak praised the level of cooperation between EUFOR, NATO and the OHR on the ground. He recognized NATO's lead role in defense reform, but added his belief that progress on defense is stalling due to ethnic obstacles and this dynamic revealed limited prospects for greater PfP engagement by Sarajevo, at least in the near term.

¶9. (C) Lajcak also predicted that there could be another fight about the continuation of OHR's mandate, which the Peace Implementation Council has decided should aim to close by June 2008. Russia seems to be the only country interested in winding up the mission soon.

¶10. (C) 21 Allies made statements. All of them noted their explicit support for OHR.

¶11. (C) Drawing of Ref A, Charge Olson expressed deep concern about the political situation, considering it a threat to peace and security. He reiterated full support for High Representative Lajcak and his October 19 measures, which are not targeted at any ethnic group, and said the U.S. expects all parties to abide by the High Representative's decisions and carry out their Dayton responsibilities. Olson welcomed

the October 28 Mostar declaration and hoped that it will lead to additional steps that will enable Bosnia to meet the EU's criteria for conclusion of a Stabilization and Association Agreement. He also endorsed the SYG's October 31 statement on behalf of NATO concerning the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¶12. (C) Norway and Iceland asked for more details on what kind of practical measures of support would be useful to the OHR. Without going into much detail Lajcak said that fines, targeted sanctions, and travel limits could be useful tools. He mentioned that Milorad Dodik travels to Austria for medical care and wants to send his sons to attend U.S. schools.

¶13. (C) Norway, Slovenia, and Turkey asked for a more detailed assessment of the Russian stance. Lajcak replied that he believed that Moscow's support for Banja Luka was aimed at reducing the OHR to the level of a paper tiger, further reducing Western effectiveness in the Balkans, and staunching consolidation of the region's shift toward the Euro-Atlantic path.

¶14. (C) Canada observed that this is an example of Russia opening another front in its contentious relationship with Euro Atlantic structures. Portugal noted the support of the European Union Presidency for the OHR and Lajcak's actions.

¶15. (C) Estonia, Romania, and Poland asked for an assessment of the risks of EUFOR being drawn into conflict. Lajcak said he believed that it was unlikely to be drawn into conflict. There seemed to be general agreement among PermReps, however, that EUFOR could be impacted severely by recent developments and skepticism that it is sufficient to deal with a major crisis. Lajcak argued that EUFOR should not be further downsized and should remain in BiH as long as OHR remained.

¶16. (C) Germany's intervention took a unique tone, cautioning that sanctions would have to be targeted and limited to be effective, and questioning the realism of Lajcak's previous efforts to provide the Bosnian Serbs safe avenues for retreat from their extreme positions. Lajcak answered that he meets with Dodik twice a week, will keep lines of communication to him open, and has no interest in humiliating him.

¶17. (C) The Czech Republic and Lithuania asked about progress in defense reform. Lajcak answered that public enthusiasm for Euro Atlantic structures had not been transformed into political pressure on the leadership, leaving Bosnian Serb politicians a free hand to pursue an ethnically motivated agenda at the expense of reform.

¶18. (C) Greece suggested that the credibility of the international community is at stake but added that we should remain calm. The Greek PermRep thought that the EU has the lead on Bosnia and that should not be changed.

¶19. (C) In response to a query from the Netherlands the SYG informed the NAC that the issue of a potential drawdown in the size of the NATO HQ in Sarajevo remains under consideration and had been referred to National Military Authorities. Dutch PermRep Schaper questioned the wisdom of a further drawdown given recent events.

OLSON